

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 009813

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER

THE FOLLOWING IS A REPEAT OF PARIS 0820 ACTION
SECSTATE INFO CAIRO TEL AVIV DAMASCUS AMMAN BEIRUT
ALGIERS JIDDA MOSCOW LONDON GENEVA USUN NEW YORK
10 JANUARY 1975. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 00820

GENEVA FOR MEPC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, XF

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

BEGIN SUMMARY: QUAI BELIEVES THAT SADAT EXPECTS A NEW
SINAI DISENGAGEMENT. WITHOUT EXCLUDING A GOLAN PULL-
BACK AS THE NEXT STEP, THE FRENCH THINK IT THEN WILL
PROBABLY BE NECESSARY TO GO TO GENEVA IN ORDER TO BUDGE
THE TWO SIDES FROM HARDENED POSITIONS, QUAI SAYS SADAT
WOULD GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT THE PLO IF PROVISION IS MADE
FOR LATTER'S SUBSEQUENT PARTICIPATION. THE FRENCH ARE
UNSURE ABOUT BREZHNEV'S HEALTH BUT THINK HE HAD GOOD
POLITICAL REASONS TO POSTPONE HIS TRIP TO EGYPT. THEY
ALSO CONTINUE TO BELIEVE ISRAEL SHOULD TAKE THE PLO'S
STAYING POWER MORE SERIOUSLY. SADAT WILL VISIT PARIS
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JANUARY 27 - 28. END SUMMARY

1. IN THE WAKE OF THE NUMEROUS VISITS MADE RECENTLY BY HIGH-RANKING FRENCH OFFICIALS TO MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES, DCM CALLED ON QUAI DIRECTOR FOR THE MIDDLE EAST DE COMMINES JANUARY 9 FOR A READING ON CURRENT FRENCH THINKING ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA. COMMINES SAID HE BELIEVES THAT SADAT IS RELATIVELY CONFIDENT ABOUT ACHIEVING ANOTHER DISENGAGEMENT IN THE SINAI, A JUDGMENT COMMINES SEEMS TO SHARE. REPLYING TO A QUESTION ON WHAT THE NEXT STEP MIGHT BE, COMMINES AT FIRST SAID THAT A NEW SINAI DISENGAGEMENT WOULD AUGUR WELL FOR A RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA MEPC. HE THEN SAID A SECOND GOLAN PULL-BACK MIGHT LOGICALLY FOLLOW A SINAI DISENGAGEMENT, SINCE IT IS IMPORTANT TO PREVENT THE "EXTREME SYRIAN FRUSTRATION" THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE RESULT. HE FINALLY SAID A NEW SINAI DISENGAGEMENT WOULD BE THE LAST PARTIAL STEP; IT WOULD THEN BE "NECESSARY" TO GO TO GENEVA.

2. ELABORATING ON THE REASONS FOR A MOVE TO GENEVA AFTER ANY NEW SINAI ACCORD, COMMINES SAID THAT ON THE ONE HAND, TH ISRAELIS WILL REFUSE TO CEZE ANY MORE TERRITORY EXCEPT IN THE CONTEXT OF A FINAL SETTLEMENT. THE ARABS, FOR THEIR PART, WILL GIVE NOTHING MORE WITHOUT A SOLUTION TO THE PALESTINE PROBLEM. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS ARE "NOT WRONG" IN STATING THAT THE ONLY WAY TO MOVE THE TWO SIDES FROM THEIR HARDENED POSITIONS IS TO GO TO GENEVA WHERE THEY WOULD BE FORCED AT LEAST TO TALK TO EACH OTHER. THE FACT OF THE US AND USSR'S CALLING FOR A NEW ROUND AT GENEVA WOULD ITSELF BE IMPORTANT, HE CONTINUED, AS IT WOULD MAKE THE ISRAELIS, AS WELL AS THE PLO AND THE ARAB STATES, THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT MODIFYING THEIR FROZEN STANCES. COMMINES ASSERTED UNAMBIGUOUSLY THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE PREPARED TO GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT THE PLO, PROVIDED PROVISION IS MADE FOR PLO PARTICIPATION IN THE NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. HE COMMENTED THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE "MASTERS OF THE GAME" WHEN THEY CHOOSE TO MAKE THE EFFORT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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3. COMMINES SAID THAT BRAZHNEV'S HEALTH IS AN ENIGMA BUT THAT ANY ASTUTE OBSERVER OF THE SOVIETS COULD SEE THAT EVEN IF HE IS IN GOOD HEALTH, BREZHNEV HAS GOOD POLITICAL REASONS FOR POSTPONING HIS VISIT TO EGYPT. SADAT STILL BELIEVES SECRETARY KISSINGER WILL ACHIEVE A FURTHER PULL-BACK IN THE SINAI; THE SOVIETS DISAGREE. FROM THE SOVIET VIEWPOINT, IF KISSINGER DOES SUCCEED'

THERE IS NO REASON FTR BREZHNEV THROUGH HIS VISIT TO GIVE HIS BENEDICTION TO SOMETHING THE SOVIETS DO NOT LIKE. SHOULD KISSINGER FAIL, THE RUSSIANS COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND BE ASSURED THAT SADAT WOULD GIVE BREZHNEV A WARM WELCOME IF RECEIVED UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

4. IN AN ALMOST PHILOSOPHIC TONE, COMMINES SAID ISRAEL IS PLAYING WITH THE NOTION THAT THE PLO WILL LOSE ITS CREDIT IN THE WORLD, EVEN AMONG ARABS, THAT HUSSEIN CAN ONCE AGAIN BECOME AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE ARAB-ISRAELI EQUATION, AND THAT THE PALESTINIANS WILL COME TO RECOGNIZE THAT THEY CAN GAIN NOTHING UNDER PLO LEADERSHIP. THUS, HE CONTINUED, THE ISRAELIS PLAN TO STALL AND DO NOTHING, THINKING THAT WITH TIME THE PLO WILL LOSE ITS AUTHORITY. DESCRIBING SUCH AN ATTITUDE AS "WISHFUL THINKING", COMMINES ASSERTED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN LESS MENTION OF THE PLO, SINCE THE END OF THE UNGA AND DURING THE HOLIDAYS, ONCE THERE IS (OR IS NOT) A NEW SINAI DISENGAGEMENT, THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE AND THE PLO WILL LOOM LARGE ONCE AGAIN.

5. COMMINES INDICATED THAT SADAT IS NOW EXPECTED IN PARIS JANUARY 27-28 AND THAT UNLESS THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT GOES TO THE U.S., THE FRENCH BELIEVE HE WILL VISIT NO OTHER COUNTRY AT THAT TIME.
RUSH

UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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